



ANC TODAY

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Nothing to fear from vigorous debate



In recent days and weeks, our newspapers and airwaves have been filled with all manner of divergent views on a whole range of subjects. In some instances, the exchanges have gotten very heated, whether about racism at the University of the Free State or the amount of force police officers may legally use to catch criminals.

This is not abnormal. As we have said before, South Africans should not fear debate. Nor should they be concerned about the expression of different views, whether within the ruling party, the Alliance or broader society.

Debate is a fundamental feature of a democratic society, and is necessary for the development of ideas and social progress. No person or organisation can claim a monopoly of wisdom, nor can any idea be immune from scrutiny.

No organisation, and certainly no liberation movement, can hope to develop and grow if it does not create space for open, democratic debate. Indeed, the resilience of the ANC during even the most trying times is due in large part to its ability to accommodate a diversity of views and interests. It has been able to remain united and coherent by working to ensure that all views are heard and considered within the structures of the organisation.

What distinguishes the ANC from a debating society, however, is that each discussion leads to a decision, and each decision forms the basis of united action. The principle of democratic centralism, which is widely misunderstood by those outside our ranks, requires that once a decision is democratically taken within the collective after open debate, all the members of that collective are bound to respect, defend and implement that decision.

This means that while all ANC members are encouraged to vigorously debate any matter before the collective, they should undertake that debate in a disciplined manner, and respect the majority decision. That doesn't mean the matter cannot be opened for review at a later stage.

Debate is not restricted to the ANC. Within and among its Alliance partners there has long been a culture of debate. For many decades the Alliance partners have sought to influence the thinking of each other, and have made themselves open to influence.

This has been done in the understanding that the correctness of any decision can only be enhanced by exposure to a range of different perspectives.

WEEK IN REVIEW

SA govt will keep debt contained – Zuma | "We will need to borrow more to meet our needs, we are determined, however, to contain our borrowing requirement within sustainable limits to ensure that we do not burden future generations with our debt," President Jacob Zuma said in a speech to the National Council of Provinces. The National Treasury reported that the budget deficit would swell to a record 7,6% of gross domestic product (GDP) this financial year but would be gradually reduced over the next three years.

Mozambique holds elections | Mozambique held presidential, parliamentary and provincial elections. President Armando Guebuza has promised to clear the way for more foreign investment, if he retained power. Analysts expect Guebuza to retain his presidential seat and his Frelimo party to win a majority.

Zuma criticises education and local government | Schools and local government are not delivering the results that South Africans need to overcome the recession and the ravages of apartheid, President Jacob Zuma. He told the National Council of Provinces that a large slice of the population lacked the skills they needed to find employment, leaving them jobless for years at a time. He said his administration has chosen to respond to the global economic crisis not by propping up banks and businesses, but by correcting long-standing problems, many of them part of the legacy of apartheid.

Thus, over the years, the South African Communist Party (SACP) has had an impact on the thinking of the ANC and vice versa. The ANC and SACP have had a profound impact on the political direction of the progressive trade union movement. This gave birth to a very unique relationship between the ANC and organized revolutionary trade unions which has been aptly captured by Chief Luthuli in his famous assertion that the African National Congress is the shield and the progressive trade union movement the spear.

Those outside the Alliance (and even some within) have struggled to understand this cross-pollination of ideas. Indeed, many people fear it. And so arises this feverish pre-occupation with a "left takeover" of the ANC. This is not new. For years, the ANC has been advised to break with the SACP. There are those who fear the "unhealthy" influence of the trade union movement.

The point that many people fail to grasp is that the ANC, by its own definition and by any objective standard, is in fact an organisation of the left. It is a multi-class national liberation movement with a bias towards the working class and poor.

This is evident in its policy positions and in the programmes it has pursued over the last 15 years in government. These policies have been, and continue to be, the subject of ongoing debate, within the ANC and within the Alliance. Not everyone agrees with every policy position, but all are bound to respect the collective decision.

The policies that this administration is pursuing do not belong to one person or any group of people. They are the policies of the organisation, adopted in Polokwane in December 2007, captured in our 2009 election manifesto, and detailed in government's Medium Term Strategic Framework.

As government proceeds to implement its programmes it is guided by these policies, and follows the strategic direction provided by the constitutional structures of the movement.

This is borne out, for example, in government's economic policy. There has been much talk in recent weeks about who exactly determines the country's economic orientation. This talk is not confined to those outside the movement and Alliance.

There are some who promote the idea that economic policy will be determined by one or other Minister, and that a great struggle is on to determine who that Minister should be. We should be cautious about accepting this idea. As soon as we start associating government policy with one individual, we risk forgetting that these policies are developed collectively and reflect an organisational position.

Though there are Ministers responsible for coordinating economic policy, they do not determine policy. That is the function of Cabinet, drawing on the positions of the ANC which is the key policy formulator, guided by the mandate of the electorate.

Policy arises from debates in the ANC, through a very intensive process leading up to national conferences, where resolutions are taken, thus informing the policy direction.

There is nothing therefore in the argument that the Alliance partners determine the policy of the ANC. It appears that people get mistaken when Alliance partners raise their views in an open debate, commenting on policy.

What is surprising is that people always forget this, and yet ANC processes are so open and so transparent. To demonstrate that people quickly forget this, when an ANC member expresses his view on any issue, people immediately ask: "is this new policy?"

They forget this elaborate and close to scientific policy making process in the ANC. We should not be afraid to debate policy, but we should be cautious not to associate certain policy positions with individuals. There is an unhealthy tendency to label comrades, sometimes even to call each other derogatory names.

This detracts from the purpose of debate, which is to critically examine differing perspectives. Rather than impugn the motives of comrades, we should concentrate instead on exposing every view to scrutiny, regardless of who expresses it.

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Expedite corruption cases – Zuma

| President Jacob Zuma said corruption cases should be handled faster to avoid a situation where people are suspended on full pay for long periods. He said though all allegations of corruption must be tested, he was concerned that "people are suspended for a long time without the issue being handled because at times it is very difficult to handle". Zuma said corruption had frequently been cited as a cause of service delivery protests. As a democrat he firmly believed people had the right to protest "because they should be free to express themselves", but warned he would not tolerate violence.

KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape vote on demarcation

| People of Matatiele engaged on demarcation elections to determine whether their city should be incorporated into KwaZulu-Natal or remain in the Eastern Cape. The elections experienced a bad start when some voting stations failed to open. Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Minister Sicelo Shiceka announced the date of the elections during a community meeting in the area on Sunday.

ANC Task Team hands Caster Semenya report to the Sport and Recreation Ministry

| The ANC support for Caster Semenya Task Team announced its decision to hand its report to the Ministry of Sports and Recreation for further investigation and conclusion of the matter. Jackson Mthembu who is the convener of the team said that the ANC's position about Athletics South Africa has not changed, and they are more convinced that ASA and their doctor have a case to answer.

Comrade Imam Solomon pass on |

The African National Congress paid tribute to a spiritual leader and former anti-apartheid activist Imam Gassan Solomon who died on Wednesday after being diagnosed with prostate cancer earlier this year. He was a member of the United Democratic Front and the ANC. After his return from exile he became an ANC MP, serving in three administrations. He was an administrator of the Muslim Judicial Council.

We should not shy away from debate. Nor should we fear criticism of our views, whether by comrades or in broader society. It is important that we debate economic policy. It is important that we debate how to improve the effectiveness of our police, and how we can better safeguard the lives of our police men and women. We need also to debate how best to respond to incidents of racist and sexist abuse.

Though these may be emotive issues, we should nevertheless be able to conduct these debates in a way that deepens our understanding of the issues. No person should be afraid to express themselves on any matter, just as no person should assume that their views are beyond criticism.

If the history of the African National Congress is any guide, the expression of difference is not something to avoid; it is instead something to encourage and to nurture. Only once all views have been canvassed can we say that our decisions are the best they can be. Only then can we be united in action.

Jacob G. Zuma

VIEW POINT | BY BATHABILE DLAMINI

Social grants are critical instrument to fight poverty



The world is currently facing the biggest economic turbulence in ages, owing to the sub-prime lending crisis which started in the US and spread through out the world. While a few world economies are now showing signs of recovery, the reality is that the world economy is not out of the economic woods yet.

Given the interconnectedness of the global financial system, not a single country has not felt the spill over effects of this economic meltdown which has shaken the very foundation of the free market system. South Africa is no exception. As is the norm, when an economy skids into the negative growth territory, it is the poor who bear much of the burden.

With business facing ruin, this means reduced tax for government which in turn affects government spending on basic services such as paying out grants. Through its foresight and careful planning, the ANC government will be able to continue to deliver on its mandate including paying out grants.

According to the figures from the Statistics South Africa, at least 208 000 people lost their jobs in the first quarter of this year. While in the second quarter the number of people who were laid off was not as big as in the first. With more people expected to join the unemployment ranks, this will not only worsen the poverty levels, but will put more pressure on the state coffers as there will be more people who will rely on the state for support.

Given the legacy of apartheid, with more people being relegated to the outer fringes of the labour market, those who are receiving grants are forced to support the whole family, further depleting their meager resources.

Since the dawn of the democracy, the ANC-led government has endeavored to create a comprehensive social security net, to cushion many of our people from the pangs of economic deprivation.

This is in line with the vision of the Department of Social Development, which is to create a caring and integrated system of social development services that facilitates human development and improves the quality of life, and this also dovetails with the 52nd Conference of the ANC in Polokwane.

LATEST STATEMENTS

ANC calls for workplace transformation in Cape Town,
29 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1029a.html>

Statement of the Caster Semenya support Task Team Progress,
29 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1029.html>

The ANC welcomes the Medium Term Budget Policy Statement presented by the Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan,
27 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1027a.html>

African National Congress (ANC) response to the article on The Star newspaper titled "Malema No Leader - Da Youth",
27 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1027.html>

ANC wishes all the grade 12 learners well, 26 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1024a.html>

ANC signs a Memorandum of Understanding with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement,
24 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1024.html>

ANC appalled by SADTU strike threat in Soweto, 23 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1023a.html>

ANC statement on Comrade Kader Asmal, 23 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1023.html>

The conference instructed us to;

- Equalise lifelong learning and economic opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- Accelerate all our programmes in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals.
- Establish a mandatory system of retirement fund and further establish a broad-based retirement fund that covers low-income groups.
- Strengthen collaboration between the departments of Education and Social Development and other related departments in the provision of Early Childhood Development (ECD).

The conference further instructed us that;

- Grants must not create dependency and thus must be linked to economic activity.
- Low cost retirement fund be created.
- Child support grants be gradually extended to 18 years.
- Pensionable age must be equalised and be set at 60 years.
- Coordinated national drug campaign be intensified to fight substance abuse.

However, the ANC led-government has always understood the fact that this comprehensive security net is not an end in itself but it is aimed at helping our people to keep afloat so that they can graduate to other economic opportunities and self-sustainability.

Critically, the ANC government has always viewed the social security net as a critical pillar in a basket of measures aimed at stimulating the economy of our country. This means that social grants should not be viewed in isolation from the broader mandate of government to create employment and economic growth in our country.

In this regard, one of the critical tasks with which the ANC government was seized with when it assumed political power, was not only to rationalize the social security system in the country but to eradicate the racially skewed social security system in which other races were receiving more than others. This resulted in the apartheid driven system of disbursing of grants being abolished.

Over the past 15 years the ANC government has dispensed social grants such as pensions, foster grants, disability grants, child support grants etc. Initially when the child support grants were introduced they were received by children from birth up to the age of seven. However, the ANC government, because of the acute understanding of the levels of poverty in our communities, has increased the age limit to 14 years and our intention is to raise it up to 18 years.

With the amendment of the Social Security Act, the age of men who receive pensions has been reduced resulting in thousands of men being absorbed into the system. Currently over 13 million citizens are receiving social assistance benefits. Of these beneficiaries, nine million are children. As of January this year, the Child Support Grant was extended to children up to the age of fifteen. This enabled SASSA to enroll an additional 300 000 children.

In order to respond to the current global economic crisis, grants have increased as from April this year to ameliorate the ravages of inflation.

The Old Age and Disability Grants were increased from R960 to R1 010; the Child Support Grant from R230 to R240; the Foster Care Grant increased from R650 to R680 and the Care Dependency Grant from R960 to R1 010. The increases have gone a long way to help our people to mitigate the impact of the economic turmoil.

The economic contraction has resulted in a sharp rise in inflation and food prices in particular. South African consumers have faced increased prices of food since 2006 when global food prices started sky-rocketing as a result of bio-fuel production in the US.

LATEST SPEECHES

Address by the President Jacob Zuma to the National Council of Provinces (NCOP),

29 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/history/zuma/2009/jz1029.html>

Toast Remarks by Deputy President, Kgalema Motlanthe, on the occasion of the Gala Dinner, in honour of the Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr Goodluck Jonathan,

29 October 2009

<http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/show.asp?include=deputy/sp/2009/sp102985.htm&ID=2013&type=sp>

Address by the President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency, Mr Jacob Zuma, to the Pan African Parliament,

26 October 2009

<http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/show.asp?include=president/sp/2009/sp10261335.htm&ID=2008&type=sp>

Opening address by President Jacob Zuma to the Presidential Meeting with Executive Mayors and Mayors to discuss improving service delivery in municipalities,

20 October 2009

<http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/show.asp?include=president/sp/2009/sp10201046.htm&ID=2007&type=sp>

This has had an adverse effect on the poor which spend a huge chunk of their money on food. In fact, according to the findings of Income and Expenditure Survey, expenditure on housing, transport and food continues to dominate household consumption, gobbling up 60 percent. It is for this reason that our ANC government has increased the social relief budget from R124 million to R624 million from early this year.

In this regard, the importance of social grants in South Africa in supporting the poor cannot be overemphasized. According to a survey from the Statistics South Africa, social grants have played an increasingly important role in reducing poverty and inequality in the country.

The harsh economic environment characterized by massive retrenchments, increasing food prices and consumer debt has made social grants inherently indispensable as a way of supporting the poor.

In fact, the Income and Expenditure Survey states that because of the contribution of the social grants, poor South Africans account for less than 1,5% of income. This means that with 10 percent of the population earning more than 50% of household income in the country, the situation could be much bleaker without social grants. Because of our apartheid history, it is instructive to note that there is a correlative relationship between the number of people who are poor and their race.

While the ANC government champions non-racialism, however we can ill afford to be blind to this stark reality that those who were relegated to the outer- edges of economic activity during the apartheid era are the biggest beneficiaries of social grants. It should also be noted that social grants have provided a “sub economy” of its own in rural areas, where poverty is depressingly endemic and there are no economic opportunities.

The survey also estimated the gross income of South African households at R929,2 billion. Social insurance and grants account for 6,1% of gross income which is an equivalent of R56,8 billion. This further underscores the importance of social grants in creating equality and reducing poverty in our country.

In order to ensure that we continue to provide a safety net for the most vulnerable people in our society, we have set ourselves the target on registering more people for social grants.

As part of efforts to increase efficiencies in our department, we are working around the clock, with the South African Social Security Agency, to increase the turnaround times with regard to the applications for social grants. In this regard, we are working in tandem with Home Affairs and other relevant government structures to ensure that this is achieved.

With many of our people facing the challenge of HIV and AIDS, our Department has played a key role to ensure that we assist people living with HIV and AIDS as part of the government’s comprehensive strategy to deal with this pandemic. It is important to note that we have no doubt that the social grant intervention is a critical one for our country. However, we need to, at times, be the first ones to critic our own social reconstruction policies or their consequences.

In ensuring that those social grants are paid timeously and in a less-dangerous environment, we have partnered with chain stores to act as our agencies or become our pay-points and the Post Office. We need to tighten up monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in order to gauge the impact of our interventions but also to ensure that we do not continue to dispense social grants to people who no longer deserve them.

Fraud and corruption remains one of the key challenges and undermine the efforts of our government. We have put in place a number of measures to combat fraud and corruption. Again, we need to sharpen our preventative measures and we do believe that monitoring and evaluation of the programme will help combat the scourge of corruption and fraud.

While the economic downturn has hit the poor hardest, the ANC-led government in the form of the Department of Social Welfare has provided a safety net which has cushioned millions of South Africans from the ravages of hunger and general deprivation.

EVENTS

ANC President Jacob Zuma will on Sunday, 1 November 2009 lead a National Working Committee (NWC) delegation to Mpumalanga.

The purpose of the visit is to interact with ANC branch members, get views on the nature of community concerns at local level and get a sense of deeply rooted underlying causes of the wave of recent protests.

The NWC members will address Regional General Councils (RGCs) at Bohlabelo, Nkangala, Ehlanzeni and Gert Sibande regions. The visit will also culminate in the NWC meeting being held in Mpumalanga.

In this regard, social grants remain one of the critical government pillars in the fight to help millions of South Africans to keep afloat while searching for opportunities so that they can graduate and be self employed or be employed. Over and above this, with social grants contributing billions of rands into the economy, they generate a lot of economic activities.

The Department of Social Development will intensify its efforts to ensure that we extend the net to more people, particularly in rural areas, where many households depend on these grants for survival. With poverty levels in our country at unacceptable levels, the ANC led government should use social grants to pull out our people out of the rut of poverty.

However, it is critical that we should avoid creating dependency out of social grants. In the long run, we should measure the effectiveness of the social grants by how many people they successfully save from the ravages of poverty.

At this juncture of our economic evolution, social grants remain a critical instrument with which to ameliorate the effects of poverty in our country and to help our people to graduate to other forms of economic activities so that they can be self-sufficient.

>> Bathabile Dlamini is an ANC NEC member and Deputy Minister of Social Development

VIEW POINT | BY NGOAKO RAMATLHODI

Challenges of our times



The last fifteen years have witnessed the successful installation of our nascent democracy. It has worked so well that many see it as a miracle. Whilst so much has been achieved, much more remains to be done.

In this regard, the greatest challenge remains the transformation of the economy. The majority continue to languish in the periphery with little hope of becoming meaningful players in the foreseeable future. The current world economic crisis, have made this situation worse, with many people loosing their jobs and means of livelihood.

The result is that many, in the black community are beginning to doubt the ability of our government to resolve their bread and butter issues. In many ways, this explains the restive mood prevailing in many areas where service delivery has been poor.

Compounding this is the perception that many leaders at local government level are ill qualified or at worst outright corrupt. As activists and political leaders we must accept that whilst this may not be true in all instances, corruption is the reality we have to deal with.

Corruption takes root where there is little or no accountability at ll. It thrives in a system where rulers are elevated above the communities they are elected to serve. In this scenario, leaders act on behalf of the people, instead of empowering people to be their own liberators, as OR Tambo said on many occasion before.

Even where there is no corruption, the situation one is describing may have the effect of isolating leaders from communities, making it much more difficult to have a buy in, in face of genuine difficulties.

The essence of "amandla, awethu" is that real power must be in the hands of the people. This does not suggest a leaderless society, as anarchist would make us believe. What it does say, however, is that the system should be designed as to give the people possibilities of meaningful participation.

In participatory democracy the masses take part in activities and programmes aimed at improving their lives. Participation should not be confined to elections once in a while. In political terms we would call ward committees, organs of people's power.

In this regard, we have resolutions advocating the establishment of ward committees in wards across the country. The challenge is to ensure that such committees function, and perhaps more importantly, that they work in the interest of the whole communities in which they serve.

To achieve the above, it is my firm view that the selection of ward councillors must vest with people living in a particular ward. This should happen long before the official local government elections. A branch of the ANC would then be encouraged to field candidates acceptable to the ward constituency. In this way, the ANC candidates become the people's candidates. As people's candidates there is little chance of them loosing the actual elections.

The second advantage is that councillors would enjoy far much more legitimacy than has happened thus far. Should they remain true to their mandate, the people will defend them against any form of attack. The space for opportunist and careerists would thus be extremely limited if not completely sealed. We have always understood that political struggles are always won by those fighting on the side of majority.

In such circumstances, the struggle for the removal of sitting councillors will grind to a halt. It must be understood that the absence of in-fights is a precondition for stability. Stability will, in turn enable councillors time and space to focus on service delivery.

Currently councillors are a threatened species who spend considerable amount of time fighting for survival. Some of them get corrupt so they should eat before they are removed. Those pushing to get inside cannot wait for their turn to loot. So it has become a vicious circle, which is a real threat to our revolution.

The direct selection of councillors will immediately redefine the role of an ANC branch and restore it to its original mandate. In this regard, the role of the ANC branch would be to infuse the necessary political consciousness in the deployed councillors in order for them to understand and to change the political environment for the better. As conscious leaders they will become the commissars of the communities they lead.

The real battle for positions takes place in the ANC branch, or between the branches of the alliance. This is so, because there is a direct link between the high office and a position in constitutional structures. In many instances comrades use their positions in official structures as a ladder to positions in government. Hence, the titanic contests for branch leadership.

The system of people's candidates as advocated, is likely to restore unity and cohesion within the branch and perhaps within the alliance itself.

>> Ngoako Ramatlhodi is an ANC NEC member and ANC MP. This is an edited extract of his address at the Oliver Tambo memorial lecture at the ANC Kwabe branch